

# The refugee dilemma and migrant crisis: 'Charity begins at Home' or 'Being Home to the Homeless'? The paradoxical stance in pastoral caregiving and the infiltration and *perichoresis* of compassion

**Author:**Daniel Louw<sup>1</sup>**Affiliation:**<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa**Corresponding author:**Daniel Louw,  
djl@sun.ac.za**Dates:**

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The current refugee and migrant crisis is revealing on a deeper 'spiritual level' a crisis of meaning and habitus (attitudinal crisis). Because of prejudice, xenophobia reveals a crisis of compassion and diaconic outreach. How should local communities and communities of faith display hospitality (xenophilia) to the other (stranger, foreigner, outsider) in cases where one's own life is threatened by those you are supposed to care for? Is it true that charity begins at home, or is charity, as determined by the Christian notions of *hesed* and *oiktirmos*, an inclusive concept that should or could start with the homeless, the outcast and the outsider as well? This question points to the danger of selective compassion. It is argued that pastoral caregiving, within the refugee and migrant dilemma, should apply a hermeneutics of complexity and paradox. In this regard the theological paradox of the passion (*pathē*) of Christ should be implied in order to make room (*perichoresis*) for displaced and homeless people. The theological argument is based on the following presupposition: the *passio dei* defines 'practice' in pastoral theology as compassionate hospitality, as a mode of being-with, that eventually should infiltrate and penetrate the systemic paranoia of prejudice, as well as the networking dynamics of human relationships, irrespective of race, class and gender distinctions.

## Background and international scenario

The attack on innocent civilians in France on Friday night, 13 November 2015, leaves human beings all over the globe speechless. Paris has become the epitome of a global networking of fear and unqualified anxiety. There is no safe place on earth anymore. The globe has become the hell of uncertainty. There is no place to hide from terrorist attacks and violent revenge. The global village has become the playground of demonic and evil forces.

President Barack Obama from the United States, referred to the assault by gunmen and bombers that left at least 129 dead in the France capital, and said: 'This is an attack not just on Paris, it's an attack not just on the people of France, but this is an attack on all of humanity and the universal values that we share' (Faulconbridge & Young 2015:1). Immediately the attackers are labelled by Obama as the perpetrators. 'We stand in solidarity with them (France) in hunting down the perpetrators of this crime and bringing them to justice' (Reuters 2015:11). Obama views the Paris attacks as an outrageous attempt to terrorise civilians.

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany captured the dilemma of welcoming the stranger or defending own territory, by saying: 'Our free life is stronger than terror' (Faulconbridge & Young 2015:1). The attacks have sparked a debate in Germany on Merkel's refugee policy, and the attempt to get a better overview of the people entering the country.

Poland's European affairs minister designate said after the attacks in Paris, Warsaw would not be able to accept refugees despite the fact that in September, Poland backed an EU plan to share out 120 000 refugees across the 28-nation bloc (Faulconbridge & Young 2015:1).

The immediate impact of the assault is that countries are tightening their borders and security. The global network of fear (collective paranoia) is causing a global crisis of security and the safeguarding of territory. 'After the worst bloodshed in France since the end of World War 2, European neighbours including Britain, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Italy, imposed

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border controls' (Faulconbridge & Young 2015:1). New York, Los Angeles, Boston and other cities in the USA bolstered security and enforced beefed-up police presence. New police marshalled about 200 officers and dozens of vehicles at Times Square.

The fact that the holder of a Syrian passport, found near the body of one of the gunmen who died in Friday night's attacks in Paris (13 November 2015) and was registered as a refugee in several European countries, put the spotlight on the predicament of refugees all over the globe. Refugees are becoming not merely displaced and homeless people but also possible perpetrators. The prejudice of a possible threat is becoming a global tag spread over many Syrians: refugees are also suspects of terrorism, dangerous outsiders and outcasts. Prejudice leads to a collective paranoia of fear: radicalisation of emotions, political populism, closing of borders in Europe, exclusive thinking and defensive attitudes with the emphasis on internal, domestic and civil issues (our people) rather than on dislocated strangers (the outsiders).

The following question surfaces: Do they (the refugees as well as the attackers) also appear on the radar of our caregiving and compassion?

Brics leaders meeting in Antalya, Turkey, condemn the tragic Paris attacks. However, President Jacob Zuma of South Africa added a cautious and warning note: 'While condemning the senseless attacks, we also wish to caution against linking the terrorist's attacks to the refugee crisis in Europe. Refugees flocking to Europe in search of peace and a better life must not be labelled and ostracised as a result of this attack. The attack does not mean that every refugee is a terrorist' (Report Cape Argus 2015:2).

## Core problem

In their 19 January 2015 edition, *Time* warned against possible future attacks in Paris. On the front page the heading was: *Terror in France. Why officials in Paris feared an attack was coming.*

The article by Walt (2015:8) refers to the gruesome events of 7 January in 2015 in Paris. As a kind of revenge on a cartoon of the leader of the Islamic state of Iraq and Greater Syria, the attackers killed 12 people, among them 3 of France's best-known cartoonists, the paper's top editor and 2 police officers. It is argued that the massacre was an act foretold. For months, French officers have expressed concerns that the country was becoming increasingly vulnerable to terrorist attack. Walt (2015) pointed out:

Some young French Muslims, disillusioned by the economic hardship and what they see as a French population increasingly hostile to outsiders, have looked abroad for direction and meaning, to the jihadist groups fighting Syria and Iraq. (p. 9)

Already in January this year, the attack was called an attack on France; as an outright declaration of war. And suddenly, in terms of Friday's night attack, *the Charlie Hebdo-satire and*

*massacre have become a prelude to the turmoil of violent revenge that plunged the whole globe in a kind of systemic fear and paranoia.*

Furthermore, the political dilemma is immense – namely should countries close their borders and maintain a position of exclusive self-defence and internal security, or should they open their borders and maintain a polity of inclusive hospitality and compassionate outreach to the stranger? The events in Paris expose a much deeper spiritual crisis, namely whether we should care for mainly the fearful insiders.

For the pastoral ministry of caregiving, operating on the basis of a sacrificial ethics and the *agapē*-principle of unconditional love, the refugee dilemma and migrant crisis become even more severe and critical. It is becoming a spiritual crisis of *habitus*. Should caregiving grant unqualified compassion to all, or is there a place for a selective approach as well? Within the parameters of a phenomenology of compassion it could indeed become evident that charity begins inevitably in the first place at home (the victims – *France*) and does not start with the dilemma of the refugees or the problematic context of the so-called perpetrators (attackers from perhaps *Syria*). But, is this selective approach in principle a pastoral approach within the parameters of a theology of compassion?

## Turmoil in the global village: systemic networking within a collective paranoia

The Paris attack underlines anew that we are entering a kind of globalised paranoia and international and intercultural systemic network of panic and fear. The global psyche has become intoxicated by a kind of systemic panic and feeling that the global village has become a fearful place of dislocation.

According to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, 'We are confronted with collective terrorism activity around the world as terrorism does not recognise any religion, any race, any nation or any country' (Reuters 2015:11).

'Global village' is a phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan. In the early 1960s, McLuhan wrote that the visual, individualistic print culture would soon be brought to an end by what he called 'electronic interdependence': when electronic media replace visual culture with aural culture. In this new age, humankind will move from individualism and fragmentation to a collective identity, with a 'tribal base'. McLuhan's coinage for this new social organisation is the *global village* (McLuhan 2015).

McLuhan linked the vast network of communications systems to one extended central nervous system, ultimately linking everyone in the world. It furthermore refers to the world viewed as a community in which distance and isolation have been dramatically reduced by electronic media (as television and the Internet). It represents the idea that

people are connected by easy travel, mass media and electronic communications, and have moulded into a single mode of sameness.

Behzad Yaghmaian, a professor of political economy at Ramapo College of New Jersey, who wrote *Embracing the Infidel: Stories of Muslim Migrants on the Journey West* (Vick 2015:31), remarks as follows: 'Because of globalisation, you have awareness of life elsewhere in the world. That's crucial now. So you move'.

Because of the processes of globalisation, all human beings, whether one is living in Paris, New York or Cape Town, are involved in this global paranoia.

## The global village at a crossroad: oscillating between war and peace

Because of the factuality of complexity, the global village does not provide necessarily prosperity, development and peace. Because of too many local differences, as well as the fact that a very individualistic interpretation of democratisation is not always sensitive to communal issues as embedded in cultural context, the phenomenon of glocalisation<sup>1</sup> has become an indication of resistance against a Western understanding of democratisation and globalisation.

In the Middle East and the migration of refugees, a new kind of exodus is developing. It is as if the globe is wavering between a new kind of 'War and Peace', between location and dislocation, exploitation and disruption:

- **Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General on crisis in Middle East and Syria:** He is convinced that the horizon of hope in 2014 is bleak and dark. It seems as if the world is falling apart, there is an upheaval of crises and the threat of the Ebola virus is causing concern and anxiety. He warns of 'turbulence' ahead, with wars, refugees, disease and climate change. 'This year, the horizon of hope is darkened' (Ki-Moon 2014). On 17 October 2015, after meeting with families of refugees at a reception centre in Italy, Rome, Ban Ki-Moon said the global community has to 'stand with people who do not have any means' and provide basic necessities, such as education and sanitation (Ki-Moon 2015).
- **President Barack Obama of the United States of America, in his response at the United Nations on the Syrian crisis:** On 24 September 2014, president Barack Obama said emphatically:

The world is on the crossroad between war and peace. Mr Secretary General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen: We come together at a crossroads between war and peace; between disorder and integration; between fear and hope' (Obama 2014a).

1.A combination of the words 'globalisation' and 'localisation' used to describe a product or service that is developed and distributed globally, but is also fashioned to accommodate the user or consumer in a local market. Within different cultural contexts, glocalisation can also indicate a kind of resistance towards foreign influences.

Declaring the world at a crossroads between war and peace, US President Barack Obama vowed at the UN to lead a coalition to dismantle an Islamic State 'network of death' that has wreaked havoc in the Middle East and drawn the US back into military action. On 25 September 2014 he refers to the global crisis as 'the cancer of violent extremism' that should be destroyed. This is to his mind a general, global, but in essence, a generational task in the Middle East. 'No external power can bring about a transformation of hearts and minds' (Obama 2014b).

The argument of Obama points to the fact that healing in the global village is indeed a spiritual issue, namely the transformation of hearts and mind (the quest for a new ethos of tolerance) and a radical paradigm switch; that is, we desperately need new paradigms for dealing with crises in the global village. We need what Tolstoy (1978:vi) in his novel *War and Peace*, calls the spirit of simplicity. According to Tolstoy, the striving for societal equilibrium and justice (peace) draws humankind into war and destruction. It demarcates the tension between evil and goodness, between the falsity of power abuse and the spirit of simplicity.

## The refugee and migrant dilemma: collective fear and the crisis of dislocation and displacement

In the February edition of the *National Geographic Magazine* (2008), Cynthia Gorney, warned against the possible devastating effects of migration worldwide on local communities. Immigration has inevitably a destabilising impact on the constellation of traditional views on what a nation and citizenship is about:

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Central Americans cross illegally into Mexico – 400 235, to cite one oddly precise estimate from the Mexican National Institute of Migration – along the country's southern border, which angles over 750 miles of river and volcanic slope and jungle at the top of Central America. Nobody knows exactly how many of those migrants are headed to the United States, but most put that figure at 150 000 or more a year, and the pace of illegal migration north has picked up dramatically over the past decade, propelled in part by the lingering aftermath of the 1970s and 1980s civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. In depictions of this modern Latin American migration into the United States, the image of a great wave is often invoked, and Mexico's southern border today feels like the place in distant water where the wave first rises and swells and gathers uncontrollable propulsive force. (Gorney 2008)

How will nations and countries with fixed borders respond to this new global tsunami of migrants and refugees?

A refugee and migrant person is in fact a person without home in search of a secure space and place. Homelessness implies displacement and dislocation. It is about the quest for a safe haven and country wherein one can regain dignity, stabilise family life and start a new life.



The dilemma however is that developed nations within the global village live in a kind of catch 22 situation: they should become home to the homeless but what about internal political tensions, poverty, economic difficulties and unemployment within their own borders? Citizens themselves experience a *crisis of habitus*, namely to be caught up between resistance (anxiety and hate) and compassionate outreach (acceptance and trust).

The dilemma implies the challenge of tolerance within an atmosphere of suspicion and resistance. Because refugees and migrants carry with them different cultural and religious traditions and are in fact a financial and economic burden to governments, a kind of collective paranoia develops: how will the stranger destroy our own safety civil structures?

In order to understand the refugee and migrant crisis as a kind of international networking crisis, the following features of a collective paranoia can be identified:

- **Global dislocation and displacement as a spiritual crisis of values and compassion.** In an article by Karl Vick in *Time* (2015:25–43), he refers to ‘The Great Migration’. ‘Rarely in modern history have so many been so desperate to flee. Now their brave, and tragic, journeys are reshaping Europe and the world’ (Vick 2015:25–26). Migration is about being uprooted without a sense of belongingness and the option of going ‘back home’. ‘What’s scary is the uncertainty embedded in any journey, a vague foreboding that informed the theory of a flat earth, which merely assumed the horizon was exactly what it appears to be: a precipice. Beyond lay a void like the one at the pit of the stomach when you find yourself in a place where you know no one, darkness is gathering and nothing is like back home’ (Vick 2015:28). What is happening within the past 30 decades in the global village is a constant migration from poorer countries to richer: from Latin America to the USA, from Burma toward refuge in Malaysia, from Northern Africa and the Middle East toward the European Union, from Asian countries to the South (Australia and New Zealand), from Burundi and Zimbabwe to the Southern parts of Africa. But, suddenly it has become a cascade and tsunami – the most visible flotsam in a wider stream of human beings, a tidal stream that is changing and reshaping our understanding of what geography and civil society means. More than 600 000 people have entered Europe so far in 2015, sometimes 10 000 a day. Many governments were totally unprepared when Syrians began emerging from the Aegean Sea this summer ending in the deaths of thousands of desperate and helpless refugees.
- **The euphoria and utopia: elsewhere it will be better.** The notion ‘civil society’ is not anymore a fixed national location of territorial structures and rights. Civil society has become a global issue; it has become a mirage (even utopia) elsewhere in the global village. It has become merely impossible to make a distinction between ‘migrants’ (The umbrella term for people who have left their country of origin. This includes everyone from international students to workers entering countries illegally in search of a better life.) and ‘refugees’ (The status

of people who have fled their home country because of war or because they have suffered (feared) persecution). The crisis how to deal with refugees entering local civil societies is the crisis of their status and identity. National authorities are now being prescribed by the international law that shapes the juridical feature of the global village. Under international law refugees cannot be returned home against their will. ‘In relative terms, it can actually be good to be a refugee. At least it’s better than being a “migrant,” a legal status afforded no special protection under international law, and a label applied to some 240 million people across the globe who have crossed borders, often seeking work’ (Vick 2015:32). The tip of the ‘iceberg crisis’ is that the Syrian war has driven worldwide displacement and global dislocation to a record high, draining the emotional capacity for empathy to the spiritual pastoral crisis of compassion fatigue. According to António Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees: ‘There is definitely a battle of values, with compassion one side and fear on the other’ (Vick 2015:32). One can say the crisis of displacement and dislocation is indeed a ‘spiritual crisis’; it infiltrates value systems and the paradigm of empathetic compassion. After the alarming online pictures in the global media of the death of the 3-year-old boy, Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi in the Mediterranean Sea, the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan put the blame on European countries for turning the Mediterranean Sea into a ‘migrant cemetery’ (Shuster 2015:40).

- **Global xenophobia and the threat of ‘religious fanaticism’ – the intoxication of spiritual radicalism.** Migrants coming to Europe and Africa are often from a non-Christian background. Under the façade of developmental improvement of the structures in many poor countries in the world, especially in Africa, China is infiltrating the rural areas of Africa – the ‘Yellow Danger’ of Buddhism. Most migrants to Europe are from a Muslim background. Muslims are treated with suspicion so that the crisis is fed by security concerns. ‘Right-wing parties that promote nativism and xenophobia were already on the rise in France, Greece and other E.U. nations well before the latest surge of migrants’ (Vick 2015:32). Political parties are even taking advantage of local fear of the stranger (xenophobia). According to Joe Klein (2015:24), in the upcoming presidential elections in the USA, Republicans – including almost all the GOP presidential candidates – say that Vladimir Putin is ‘eating Obama’s lunch in Syria’. Referring to Mohammed Javad Zarif, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Klein (2015:24) is pointing out that the major problem in the Middle East is a rogue strain of Islam, invented by Saudi Arabia’s Wahhabis, that has given rise to radical Islamic movements like ISIS, al-Qaeda, the Taliban and Hizballah. The impression of xenophobia in the global village is that the Middle East is a threat to global peace. Suspicious fingers are pointing to the Saudis as the overwhelming source of not only World Trade

Centre bombers, but also 'radical Islamic missionaries, who have used religious schools – madrasahs – to spread a doctrine of hatred through the Islamic world'. As in the case of the imperialistic *corpus christianum*, religious radicalism has become the spiritual pathology in the global village and is intoxicating the belief systems of communities of faith. Instead of spreading peace in the global village, the radicalisation of abstract belief systems is contributing to the phenomenon of xenophobia and is increasingly becoming a schismatic factor rather than a reconciling factor, dividing civil societies along religious prejudices.

- In his book *Birds without Wings* (2005) Louis de Bernières describes the impact of religious differences when hijacked by political ideologies. Set against the backdrop of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, the Gallipoli campaign and the subsequent bitter struggle between Greeks and Turks, the author traces down the fortunes of one small community in Southwest Anatolia – a region in which Christians and Muslim live, and traditions have co-existed peacefully for many centuries. When war is declared and the outside world intrudes, the twin sources of religion and nationalism lead to forced marches and massacres and the peaceful fabric of life is destroyed:

But at that time not one of us doubted that it was holy war, and all of us were intoxicated with the idea of martyrdom, and the imams told us that if we die in a holy war, then we would meet the prophet himself in the garden where he abodes, and when we would be carried there by the green birds of paradise that come only for martyrs, and we knew that God had promised us success, and we knew that it is hard to get to Heaven and easy to get to Hell, and we were being given a chance to go straight to Heaven with no questions asked. It made us feel very good. If we shed a drop of blood, it would wash away our sins on the instant, God would not judge us, and on the day of resurrection each of us would have the privilege of naming 70 people who we wished to enter paradise with us, and they would enter it, and so all our family and our friends would be there with us, and the best thing was that when we reached paradise we would have 72 virgins to wait on us and do our pleasure. When we were in a coarse mood we often talked about the 72 virgins, and if you are a young man, what more could you want in your imagination? (De Bernières 2005:331)

The idea of 'holy war', 'martyrdom', 'paradise' 'heaven with 72 virgins' motivated men to destroy peace in a small village. The skewed idea created a spiritual pathology of hope that intoxicated the religious mindset of young men. It actually destroyed their understanding of the meaning of life as well as their identity as human beings. The ideology leads to fanatic, inhumane behaviour and distorted expectations.

- 'Donor inflation' and the hidden agendas of 'global funding' (international helping schemes – gambling with human beings). The transformation of civil societies into democratic societies of justice and equality has become a costly business. Local programmes of transformation in developing and poor countries, are heavily dependent on

external donors 'from overseas'. Funding in the global village is not merely about humanitarian helping schemes and the philosophy of philanthropy. Donors see funding as a capital investment, they are therefore prescriptive in terms of a 'hidden agenda' and if they don't benefit, the financial aid is cancelled' (Vick 2015:33). The point is: the outreach to refugees and the reshaping of civil societies are costly and put a lot of pressure on donations, empathy and compassion. Both are becoming conditionally with the real danger of both donor and compassion fatigue; '... the limits of compassion, coupled with wariness of Muslims, comes into remorseless focus, even in an immigrant nation' (Vick 2015:34). Yet people seem unable to help themselves. They are even becoming victims of materialistic exploitation, what Simon Shuster (2015:38–39) calls 'a smugglers' cove'. The desperate situation of migrants crossing from Turkey to Greece has become a booming business. Over the course of summer and autumn 2015 the 3.2 kilometre stretch of the shore around Fener Beach, on Turkey's Bodrum peninsula, '...turn into one of the busiest staging areas for migrant smuggling in the world' (Shuster 2015:40). The migrant's Mediterranean Odyssey has become a global nightmare and a civil society deadly whirlpool. Without any doubt, the migrant crisis points to the fact that the predicament of the vulnerable is becoming an object of gambling, risk taking and speculation. The global issue has become the following question: can the global society accommodate the plight of migrants? As Forohaar (2015:60) aptly pointed out: the decision to take in hundreds of thousands of immigrants is enormous. Although there could be benefits for hosting countries like Germany with a decline in birth rate and the need for more productive and skilled workers, the risk is tremendous. 'And yet the idea that migrants could provide a long-term economic boon is hotly challenged by populist politicians across Europe trying to score with electorates that have become more nationalistic in the wake of financial crisis' (Forohaar 2015:60). Incoming migrants could cause a new form of slavery: to lower wages and continue to recruit slaves through mass immigration.

The challenge in the refugee and migrant dilemma is how to link a spirit of simplicity with an attitude (*habitus*) of compassion. To my mind, the first step is to shift from complication thinking to complexity thinking, to a hermeneutics of complexity in pastoral caregiving. Complication easily falls prey to compassion confusion and the inflation of compassion; complexification is about the infiltration of compassion despite paradox and contradiction.

## The complexity of the refugee and migrant predicament: paradox and compassion confusion

Complexity refers to the fact that because of networking, civil societal issues are not complicated in the sense that logical answers are possible (the positivistic stance). Complexity

indicates the factuality of paradox and the fact that life in the global village has become unpredictable (the heuristic stance):

A complicated process or phenomenon can be decomposed and reduced to solvable parts and it therefore follows that with such an ontological standpoint the positivistic paradigm prevails. (Nilson 2007:238)

In complexity, paradoxes are rendered as intrinsic components of reality. According to Stacey (Nilson 2007:239) paradox implies an apparent contradiction, a state in which two apparently conflicting elements appear to be operating at the same time. One is then aware of the fact that contradictory, essentially conflicting ideas cannot necessarily be eliminated or resolved. Complexity thinking thus differs from systems thinking in the sense that components are not organised in a homogenous way but are embedded in the interplay between order and disorder. 'Ontologically, the underlying belief is that of unorder and subjectivity; epistemologically, of heuristics or antipositivism; and teleologically, of a transformative nature' (Nilson 2007:239).

Edgar Morin (2008:21) in his book *On Complexity*, pointed out that in order to deal with human problems, one has to reckon with the notion of *hyper-complexity*:

But complexity is not only quantities of units and interactions that defy our possible calculation; it also is made up of uncertainty, indetermination, and random phenomena. Complexity is, in a sense, always about chance. (Morin 2008:20)

When dealing with complexity, there are no aspirations to find optimal configurations, only transformative changes into emerging situations and contexts. With this filter, many unknowable phenomena are considered as being related to choices made in daily situations (Nilson 2007:242). Theory in science has then to deal with flux and an infinitive mode of knowing. In the wording of Taleb (2010), complication and the idea that we can fix the world is in fact a kind of 'pathology':

The first leg of the triplet is the pathology of thinking that the world in which we live is more understandable, more explainable, and therefore more predictable than it actually is. (p. 9)

Complexity thinking brings about the factuality of paradox in human existence. How should Christian spirituality deal with hope when rational solutions seem to be impossible and a spiritual approach stumbles upon unresolved paradox and contradiction?

With paradox is meant the illusion of the opposite or contradiction. As soon as thought reflects on itself, what it first discovers is contradiction' (Camus 1965:20). It seems as if the opposites exclude one another. In fact, they complement one another in order to describe complexity and the realm of faith. 'To give a basic definition, a paradox is characterized by a self-contradictory proposition that can appear absurd or nonsensical. The absurdity is embedded in the rhetoric' (Hernandez 2012:2).

Søren Kierkegaard (1962:317) connected life and death paradoxically in order to understand the aesthetics or value of life better. 'Thus death is the briefest summary of life or life reduced to its briefest form'. Within the ambiguity of life and death, 'sunshine' and 'shadow', the beauty of life and hope emerges.

The challenges in life imply more than merely stress and distress. It is the contention of Henri Nouwen that in this life, spiritual tension is irresolvable, irrevocable and inevitable. 'Many of the spiritual tensions we encounter are primarily situated within the realms of paradox, antinomy or polarity' (Hernandez about H. Nouwen 2012:2).

According to W.H. Capps (1995) the Christian hope is in essence a unique category of paradox. In his book *Hope against Hope* (1976) he points out that Christian hope is essentially complex and thus about a paradox: 'Hope against Hope'.

A Christian spirituality of compassion operates as a 'conjunctive faith' that informs the style of caregiving in ministry. Spirituality is thus viewed as the:

ability to embrace ambiguity and paradox; a sense of truth that is multiform and complex; post-critical receptivity ('second naiveté') and readiness to participate in the reality expressed in symbols, myths and rituals of one's own tradition; genuine and disciplined openness to the truths of communities and traditions other than one's own (not to be equated with relativism); movement from the prevalence of certainty to the centrality of trust. (Schipani & Bueckert 2009:317-318)

In the light of complexity and its connectedness to paradox, compassion and the outreach to people suffering in the dilemma of the refugee and the migrant crisis, should not try to come up with answers and solutions. We will then end up with compassion confusion. Our task is to point out that fear, paranoia and compassion are interconnected within a systemic interrelatedness. Compassion is a hermeneutical category in order to provide a framework of meaning in order to help people to reorientate themselves so that they can take informed decisions according to their believe system and culturally embedded philosophies of life. In such a hermeneutics of compassion the challenge is to bring about attitudinal changes, alternative perspectives and the simplicity of sobriety and prudence in order to combat the inflation of compassion.

## The refugee and migrant dilemma and the crisis of habitus: Inflation of compassion

Besides the phenomenon of xenophobia, inhabitants in the global village are constantly exposed to the inflation of compassion, indifference and apathy (Vick 2015:34).

A very alarming issue is the 'inflation' of compassion because of demands in the market driven economy. Human suffering becomes exposed to brutal economic exploitation and



manipulation. See the following remarks of former president George Bush of the USA: ‘...helping the people of Africa fight disease, advances both our interests and our ideals’ (Bush 2015:22). ‘When societies abroad are healthier and prosperous, they are more stable and secure. They become markets for our producers, not exporters of danger or sources of humanitarian crisis’ (Bush 2015:22).

The commodification of compassion develops simultaneously with a mass commodification of human suffering as well:

And yet the idea that migrants could provide a long-term economic boon is hotly challenged by populist politicians across Europe trying to score with electorates that have become more nationalistic in the wake of financial crisis. (Forohaar 2015:60)

## Possible solution?

The burning question for pastoral caregiving is the following: Is there a possible solution and answer or explanation?

Klein (2015:24) emphatically states: ‘Let’s begin with the obvious: there are no easy answers in the Middle East’.

In his research on poverty in India and the link between income inequality and economic growth, Angus Deaton of Princeton, winner of the 2015 economics Nobel Prize, raised doubts about sweeping solutions for poverty and the effectiveness of aid programs in the attempt to address the issue of human welfare (Reuters Associated Press 2015:7).

In order to sum up one should argue that, in the light of the current terrorist paranoia and the refugee and migrant dilemma, one should admit that an immediate solution is not possible (the ‘complication’ option). The fact of paradox points into the direction of ‘complexification’ (Morin 2008). This means, one has to deal with several contradictions and opposing issues simultaneously. Complexification implies that one deals with life issues as a networking whole and a systemic dynamics. In systemic networking the option for possible ‘healing’ and ‘wholeness’ is to change the quality of the different elements that are linked to one another.

Within the systemic networking of interculturality, the systemic networking option implies the change of attitudes in the light of overarching values that enhance human dignity. The latter presupposes the mutuality and exchange of virtues like prudence, justice, temperance and courage (Aristotle) (Louw 2008:281). What is most needed is a non-selective morality within the framework of a taxonomy of virtues and spiritual practices that reflects the simplicity of a Christian attitude (Sperry 2002:70): charity, patience, humility, fidelity, fortitude and integrity. In all of them, hospitality and compassionate *diakonia* are core values in a Christian understanding of pastoral caregiving. They can be called infiltrating or osmotic elements of *hesed and oiktirmos* (the how and practice of xenophilia).

Thus, the reason for the connection between compassion and xenophilia, because xenophilia is about an inclusive approach

that attends to the other despite of differences on an ideological level. Xenophilia interpenetrates differences and polarities; in connection to *perichoresis*, xenophilia creates room for dislocated human beings and brings about meaningful exchange of ideas despite fear and the prejudice of xenophobia.

As previously argued, the refugee dilemma boils down to the question of the how of human behaviour within complexity and paradox. This ‘how’ refers to habitus: our disposition and basic attitude in the systemic networking of life as determined by convictions, normative issues, moral frameworks of interpretation and basic belief systems.

How citizens are going to respond can contribute not to a solution, but to creating space and place for dislocated human beings: on becoming home for the homeless and dislocated.

This emphasis on the ‘how’ of civil engagement and societal intervention, has been emphasised by a recent publication of *Der Spiegel* (29/08/2015). The front cover page put it in a nutshell: ‘Es liegt an uns, wie wir leben werden’ (Our attitude determines the how of our life). The main article refers to the predicament of migration and the plight of the refugees in Germany (Amann 2015:28). The societal tension is between the welcoming of the refugees and the setting of limitations, between tolerance and resistance. Thus the alarming reality: we oscillate between resistance and accommodation.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that any pastoral response should accept the insoluble reality of the attempt to isolate and safeguard own territory. On the other hand human beings are not merely territorial animals. We live according to values by which we interpret the meaning of life. Thus, the wavering realistic paradox: limitation and integrity (*Grenzen und Ehrlichkeit*) (Amann 2015:28).

## Compassionate pastoral caregiving: the *perichoresis*<sup>3</sup> of mercy in complexity and the paradox of fear and embracement

The Christian poet Lactantius (Davies 2001:235), who lived from the third to the fourth century, combined the concept of compassion, *miser cordia*, to the notion of *humanitas*. He viewed compassion as a corporate strength granted by God

2. ‘Noch nie so viel Hass, noch nie so viel Hilfsbereithheit, auf diese Formel lässt sich das neue Deutschland bringen. Und dazwischen eine schweigende Mehrheit. Es braucht vor allem zweierlei: Grenzen und Ehrlichkeit’ (Amann 2015:28-29).

3. The word *perichoresis* comes from two Greek words, *peri*, which means ‘around’, and *chorein*, which means ‘to give way’ or ‘to make room’ (from Greek: περιχώρησις *perikhōrēsis*, ‘rotation’); it describes the relationship between each person of the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The word *circumcession* (later *circuminsession*) is also used to mean the same idea. I am using it not to describe a triune relationship but as an indication of how the spirituality of compassion as outcome of Christology and pneumatology, describe and present the interpenetration of the Spirit of God in cosmic events and systemic networking of human relationships; it is an indication of exchange in order to make room and space, to influence; it indicates a kind of mutual intersecting or interpenetration. The word *perichoresis* could be translated as ‘rotation’ or ‘a going around’. *Perichoresis* is not found in the Greek New Testament but is a theological term used in three different contexts. In the first, *perichoresis* refers to the two natures of Christ in perfect union within the same Person. In the second context, *perichoresis* refers to the omnipresence of God as He ‘intersects’ with all creation (see Acts 17:28). In the third context, it refers to the mutual intersecting or ‘interpenetration’ of the three Persons of the Godhead and may help clarify the concept of the Trinity. It is a term that expresses intimacy and reciprocity among the Persons of the Godhead. A synonym for *perichoresis* is *circuminsession*. Online at <http://www.gotquestions.org/perichoresis.html>. Accessed on 17/11/2015.

(*hunc pietatis adfectum*) in order that humankind can show kindness to others, love them and cherish them, protecting them from all dangers and coming to their aid (Lactantius in Davies 2001:35). Compassion thus creates a bond of human society and displays human dignity. '*Humanitas* is to be displayed to those who are 'suitable' and 'unsuitable' alike, and this is done humanely (*humane*) when it is done without hope on reward' (Lactantius in Davies 2001:35).

Former Archbishop Desmond Tutu puts the following challenge on the table of practical theological reflection: 'We were involved in the struggle because we believed we would evolve a new kind of society. A caring compassionate society. At the moment many, too many, of our people live in gruelling demeaning, dehumanising poverty. We are sitting on a powder keg. We really must work like mad to eradicate poverty' (Tutu 2004:33).

Compassion gives meaning to life. Dostoyevsky concurred with the assumption that without compassion life becomes an unbearable toil. Compassion makes life bearable. 'Compassion would teach even Rogozhin, give a meaning to his life. Compassion was the chief and, perhaps, the only law of human existence' (Dostoyevski 1973:263).

Compassion could be called the poetics of love and the aesthetics of God in suffering. In order to expand on the notion of *homo aestheticus* from the perspective of the poetics of God, I would like to link the meaning question to a theology of *oiktirmos*.

It was the so-called 'atheist' Ludwig Feuerbach (1904) who already in the nineteenth century warned the church against the idol of a God with 'brains' without any passion and 'heart'. In chapter VI of his book *Das Wesen des Christentums* Feuerbach reflects on the secret of the suffering of God (*Das Geheimnis des leidende Gottes*) (1904:126–136). He distinguishes between the God of abstract philosophy/God as pure action, and the God of Christendom: God as pure passion/the God of pure suffering (*die Passion pura, das reine Leiden*) (Feuerbach 1904:127). The suffering of God means: God is a heart (*Gott ist ein Herz*) (Feuerbach 1904:131). A God without a heart is an idol. The secret of the suffering God is the secret of existential experience (*Geheimnis der Empfindung; kontingente bevindelijkheid*). The Christian religion is for Feuerbach in essence a religion of suffering and compassion.

Vulnerability and weakness are constituents of suffering and human experience; they are signs of passionate fulfilment and of a divine force in our being human (Feuerbach 1904:31). One can say that Feuerbach actually challenges the formal and zombie categories of an institutionalised religion that projected a powerful imperium rather than a vulnerable ecclesiology.

Within the Hebrew tradition the scriptural narrative as displayed in Exodus 3:14 founds the priority of compassion: the act of 'divine presencing which is a boundless and unending being-with' (Davies 2001:20). The notion 'I am who I am' is one of the most profound statements regarding the

being and essence of God. The Hebrew refers to a fundamental promise and expression of the faithfulness of God. In fact, it can be translated and paraphrased that God is a unique kind of deity, namely that God will always be there where his people are. Exodus 3:14 can be viewed as the foundation of a spirituality of hope; it founds the future dimension of hope guaranteed by the faithfulness of God. In a Christian hermeneutics, an ontology of hope (hope as the structure of being and a new state of mind) is essentially an expression of a theology of hope and a divine promise: I will be your God!

According to Martha Nussbaum, compassion should be preferred in order to express 'the basic social emotion' (Davies 2001:238), connecting both the cognitive and the affective. For Nussbaum compassion is in fact a certain kind of reasoning, a certain kind of thought about the well-being of others.

For the rabbis in the Jewish tradition the compassion and creativity of God were modalities of the divine presence in the world (Davies 2001:243). Compassion displayed an active and historical presence with and for Israel, serving in the formation of a holy fellowship of people who would be mindful of the covenant and reverently honour his name and faithful promises:

As the signifier of a divine quality which can apply also to human relationships, the root *rhm* has much in common with the noun *hesed*, which denotes the fundamental orientation of God towards his people that grounds his compassion action. As 'loving-kindness' which is 'active, social and enduring', *hesed* is Israel's assurance of God's unfailing benevolence. (Davies 2001:243).

The *passio dei* in its connection to the praxis of God defines 'practice' in pastoral theology to compassion (*rhm* in close connection to the root *hmn*, which means to be gracious). Together with *oiktirmos* and *praxis*, the *passio dei* expresses the being quality of God as connected to human vulnerability and suffering (Esser 1978:598). The verb *splanchnizomai* is used to make the unbounded mercy of God visible by means of the unqualified praxis of hospitality and *diakonia*.

Compassion in a Christian understanding of a theology of compassion is essentially determined by Christ's vicarious suffering (Gärtner 1978:724). His vicarious suffering took place *ephapax*, once for all (Heb 7:27). In the Synoptic gospels, *paschō* is used within the framework of the passion of Christ. Our sympathy and compassion is determined by the fact that Christ exercises compassion (Gärtner 1978:722). Instead of the emotional interpretation of compassion by the Stoics and their emphasis on the fact that passion (*pathē*) should be overcome in order that the ideal of 'dispassionateness' (*apatheia*) may be attained, active and practical compassion (*sympaschō*) is an issue of faith in Christ (1 Cor 12:26; Heb 10:34) (Gärtner 1978:724). In this regard compassion should be connected to a ministry of serving (*diakoneō*) (Gärtner 1978:724).

This kind of ministry should be a mode of interpenetration and infiltration within the antinomy and paradox of fear and compassion without the selective morality to side only with



the victim without negotiating and encountering the perpetrator. This kind of *perichoresis* of unconditional love is what *cura animarum* (care and cure of human souls) is about.

*Cura animarum* starts on a practical level caregiving with, (1) an unqualified grassroots encounter with all stakeholders in the refugee and migrant dilemma, (2) it moves to mutual understanding and interpretation beyond the hermeneutics of suspicion and prejudice, (3) it promotes negotiation with all parties involved; it alters social structures of exclusive participation to inclusive participation, (4) it applies a pastoral polity of presence: a compassionate being with them, where they are and (5) it practices an hospitable infiltrating and osmotic *perichoresis* of making room or home for the homeless.

*Cura animarum* does what Bajekal (2015:75) in an article in *Time* (The Welcome. Germans open their Homes to Refugees) pointed out as an alternative to xenophobia: to be part of a grassroots movement that keeps the welcoming machine running for the estimated 1 million asylum seekers the country will reportedly receive during 2015. 'Ordinary Germans have opened their homes to strangers fleeing violence far beyond Europe's borders' (Bajekal 2015:73).

One has to deal with the paradox: the refugee crisis can bring out the ugliness in human beings, but reveal the best as well.

The very special field of the discipline of soul care should be the realm of life and engagement with the existential reality of tragedy and suffering; it should try to bring out the best in human beings.

In Greek tragedy, the human hubris (the illusion that self-confidence and pride can cope on its own with the demands of life) is frequently exposed to disaster through the combination of a personal failing and circumstances with which humankind cannot deal or cope. Within paradox and ambivalence tragedy is the conflict of pity and fear (the paradoxical character within the plot of human misery and tragedy – Aristotle).<sup>4</sup> Meditation on loss, death and suffering inevitably lead to the puzzle of fate and tragedy with the burning question: How is it possible to help the human soul to cope in a meaningful way with loss, dying and death? As mortal beings, we cannot escape transience. Caregivers should therefore become agents of hope if they want to do what Socrates had in mind: To be a healer of the 'soul' (*iatros tēs psuchēs*) (Oden 1987:187). The pastoral caregiver becomes the in-between person (Aristotle), between pity and fear, interpenetrating this paradoxical condition with the

4. In *Poetics* 13, Aristotle states his idea that the purpose of tragedy is the arousal of pity and fear. According to Belfiore, even though Aristotle uses one set of criteria for good plots in *Poetics* 13 and a different set in *Poetics* 14, 'these two accounts are more consistent with one another than is often thought'. A tragic plot is a movement or change between the end points of good and bad fortune, because of that there are two possible kinds of change: change that begins in good fortune and ends in bad fortune, and change that begins in bad fortune and ends in good fortune. The three possible 'character types' are the characters of 'decent' people, people 'outstanding in excellence and justice'; 'evil people'; and the 'in-between man'. Of the six logically possible outcomes, Aristotle lists only four. Aristotle contends in *Poetics* 13 that the most desirable plot involves 'An in-between person who changes from good to bad fortune, due to hamartia', error. Mythos (Mythos 2015).

*perichoresis* of compassion: making room (home) for the homeless.

## Compassion as diaconic outreach: a brief case stud

Compassion as a way of life and new state of being and mind (*ethos*) is about a habitus of caregiving and comfort; it happens in human encounters as a spontaneous infiltration of systemic events; it embodies the passion (*pathē*) of Christ within the dynamics of human relationships.

Instead of xenophobia, the metaphors of host and hospitality in pastoral caregiving as exponents of a theology of compassion, exchange fear for the stranger into *philoxenia*: the mutuality of 'brotherly' love. The praxis and ministry of hope presupposes the 'office of deacon' and the virtue of hospitality in order to establish caregiving as an exponent of *diakonia*. Christian hospitality counteracts the social stratification of the larger society by providing an alternative based on the principle of equality; everyone is welcome regardless of background, status, gender or race. Within the intercultural framework of community care, the challenge to the pastoral ministry is to provide 'hospitals' (*xenodochia*), safe havens (monasteries of hope, places of refuge) where threatened people can become whole again. 'To be moral is to be hospitable to the stranger' (Ogletree 1985:1).

One should acknowledge that it is difficult to translate Christian hospitality into terminology of our contemporary society wherein hospitality was identified with the civic services and domestic spheres. Hospitality is often robbed from its sacramental character of *caritas* and has become diminished to, mostly, an ordinary secularised expression of human welfare. However, Derrida (2001:16–17) asserts: 'Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic among others. Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one's at home, the familiar place of dwelling, as much as the manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, ethics is hospitality; ethics is entirely coextensive with the experience of hospitality, whichever way one expands or limits that'. To a certain extent, hospitality reintroduces a kind of social paradox: unconditional loves becomes conditional; it focuses conditionally on the outsider in order to make outsiders insiders even beyond the categories of juridical equality; it functions outside of right, above what is juridical (Derrida 2001).

The following case during the Paris attack, 13 November 2015, illustrates the point that compassion implies to live in complexity within the acute pain of paradox. Compassion implies unconditional love exemplified if unqualified acts of diaconic outreach. Despite all forms of brutal terrorism and acute violence, there are sometimes sparks of compassionate hope.

Survivor of the massacre, Isobel Bowdery, refers to the fact that dozens of people were shot right in front of her. 'Pools of

blood filled the floor. Cries of grown men who held their girlfriends' dead bodies pierced the small music venue. Shocked and alone, I pretended to be dead for over an hour' (Jansen, Nkosi & Reuters 2015:4). And then the beacons of hope, light and compassion: strangers picked her up, consoled her, helped her and bought new clothes so that she could appear again in public without her shirt stained with blood.

She contended: 'This world is cruel. And acts like this are supposed to highlight the depravity of humans and the images of those men circling us like vultures will haunt me for the rest of my life. .... To the man who reassured me and put his life on line to try and cover my brain whilst I whimpered (*perichoresis of compassion*), to the couple whose last words of love kept me believing the good in the world, to the police who succeeded in rescuing hundreds of people; to the complete strangers who picked me up from the road and consoled me during the 45 minutes I truly believed the boy I loved was dead; to the injured man who I had mistaken for him and then on my recognition that he was not Amaury, held me and told me everything was going to be fine despite being all alone and scared himself; to the woman who opened her doors to the survivors; to the friend who offered me shelter (*perichoresis of compassion*) and went out to buy new clothes so I wouldn't have to wear this blood stained top; to all of you who have sent caring messages of support (*perichoresis of compassion*) – you make me believe this world has the potential to be better; to never let this happen again' (Bowdery 2015).

## Conclusion

Compassion displays the hope of unconditional love and pity. Compassion in Christian spirituality is not a fleeting emotion of empathy; it is a new state of being and condition; it displays the mindset of Christ's vicarious suffering on behalf of the other; it exemplifies a hospitable place and room for displaced human beings – even for displaced perpetrators.

A *perichoresis* of compassion should operate within the boundaries of a hermeneutics of complexity and paradox. The intention in a Christian performance of compassion is not to solve the tensions and to come up with instant solutions for the refugee and migrant dilemma. The challenge is to demonstrate xenophilia in such a way that both perpetrator and victim become objects of care. The challenge is to create a civil discourse that brings perpetrator, victim, insider and outsider together within a hospitable space (*xenodochia*) where they can meet on equal ground beyond the stigma of paranoid prejudice (*xenophobia*); where they can listen to the existential and spiritual needs of hope, meaning and dignity. This is exactly what the Christian notions of *hesed* and *oiktirmos*, are about: exemplifications of the inclusiveness of the *koinonia* as home to the homeless and *Heimat* to the stranger.

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